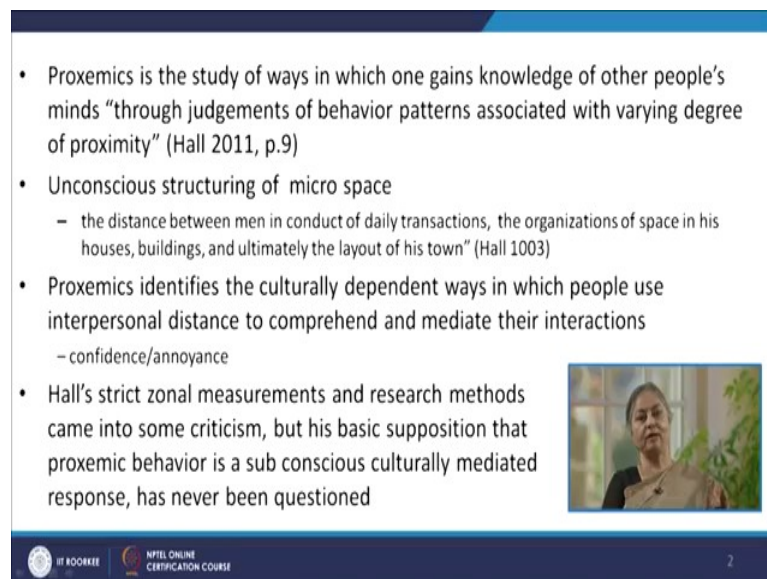


Body Language: Key to Professional Success
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
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Lecture - 03
Proxemics: Behavioral Connotations



Dear participants, welcome to the third module of 1st week. In the previous module we had discussed the basic definitions of Proxemics, what are the different zones namely the four zones of intimate social, personal and public distances. We had also looked at the cultural connotations of these zones. In today's discussion we would look at how cultures can be differentiated on the basis of being contact and non-contact, how context is important in certain cultures where as in certain it is not and also we would look at different types of space understanding.

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- Proxemics is the study of ways in which one gains knowledge of other people's minds "through judgements of behavior patterns associated with varying degree of proximity" (Hall 2011, p.9)
- Unconscious structuring of micro space
 - the distance between men in conduct of daily transactions, the organizations of space in his houses, buildings, and ultimately the layout of his town" (Hall 1003)
- Proxemics identifies the culturally dependent ways in which people use interpersonal distance to comprehend and mediate their interactions
 - confidence/annoyance
- Hall's strict zonal measurements and research methods came into some criticism, but his basic supposition that proxemic behavior is a sub conscious culturally mediated response, has never been questioned



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As we have discussed in the previous module proxemics is a way through which we look at the distances, we unconsciously and sometimes consciously also maintained between ourselves and the other people in order to assess the emotions and ideas which are communicated. However, we find that it is not only the structuring of the micro space, but it is also the structuring of the micro space which is important to understand the principle behind proxemics. Hall has very rightly commented that this is the distance

between men in conduct of their daily transactions and further he says that it is also the organizations of space in his houses, buildings and ultimately the layout of his town.


So, we find that proxemics does not only looks at the distances which people maintain between and amongst themselves in dyadic and team situations, but it also looks at how different aspects related with the space and its arrangements are significant in communication of certain messages. At the same time we find that proxemics also identifies the ways in which people bank on their cultural background to suggest how a particular spacing can pass on feelings and emotions related with their confidence, how much distance can create annoyance amongst people.

Whereas Hall's distribution of four zones sometimes has been commented on if not actually criticized, his basic supposition that proxemic behavior is also dependent on the cultural aspects has never been questioned so far. And it is this aspect of cultural associations which we will discuss in detail.

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Contact and Non-Contact Cultures

- In his book *The Silent Language* (1959), Hall has grouped cultures into two different classes: contact and non-contact
 - Contact Cultures use closer interpersonal distances and engage in more touching. Eg., Southern Europe, Arab countries
 - Whereas, people in non-contact cultures exhibit opposite preferences and behaviors. Eg., Northern Europe and North America
- Study inspired by Heini Hediger (1955), the Swiss ethologist, "father of zoo biology", who pioneered the systematic observation of distance in animals and listed four standard interaction distances among them:
 - Flight Distance (Escape Distance)
 - Critical Distance (Attack Boundary)
 - Personal Distance (Non-contact)
 - Social Distance (Communication)



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Hall has commented that cultures can be grouped in two ways, he has talked about contact and non contact cultures in his book *The Silent Language*, which was published in 1959. His idea of contact culture is to denote those cultures in which close interpersonal distances are maintained and at the same time those distances in which personal and individual touch can be promoted.

On the basis of his studies he has suggested that countries of Southern Europe as well as Arabic countries can be termed as being contact cultures because in these societies normally he found that people are prone to touching each other and at the same time they maintain closer interpersonal contact in dyadic and team situations. In comparisons to others, he has put certain countries under his division of non-contact culture, he has commented on the basis of his researchers again that Northern European countries as well as in Northern America people exhibit opposite preferences and behaviors and prefer to maintain well defined and relatively more distance in their inter personal situations.

It can also be commented in passing that Hall's distinction of four zones of proxemic distances was also deeply inspired by a study by Heini Hediger who is also known as the father of zoo biology, he was a Swiss ethologist and he had systematically observed the distances which different species of animals maintained in their behavior in contact with each other.


He has named these distances as **flight, critical, personal** and **social distances** and Hall had drawn a lot in his study on the four zones which human beings maintained with each other. However, the aspect of cultural dimensions of proxemic behavior is something which can be credited only to him.

Another aspect towards which Hall has drawn our attention is of high and low context cultures.

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High and Low Context Cultures

- Context gives additional information which is necessary to encode the whole situation/ background of the given information
- High Context Cultures: Symbolic
 - Japan and several other Asian societies, Some Western countries
 - British: I hear what you say or I almost agree; can be considered as a confirmation by person from a low context culture
- Low context: precise communication. An information has a single meaning. Rule oriented, more codified, knowledge is easily transferable/recorded - US, Germany
- May also depend on social positions
- Tendencies are reflected in space arrangements, in web page designing, understanding of time –
 - monochrome/polychrome, during dialogues and conversations



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By the idea of context, he wants to suggest that in order to understand the behavior of a person it is necessary to encode the whole situation or background of the given information. Sometimes it is reflected in the phrases which we use in our day to day speech and at the same time it is also reflected in the proximity and distance which we maintained with each other.

He had suggested that in high context cultures communication is highly symbolic and people are aware of so many unsaid things which remain in the background, but which do effect the way in which our meaning is interpreted or has to be decoded by others. For example, the social hierarchy, and the social status and at the same time certain ironical linguistic behavior which compel that we maintain a certain way of distance and certain way of communication. In Hall's studies he has commented that Japan as well as several Asian societies and certain Western countries are also under this group of symbolic cultures.

He has quoted a very interesting example from the vocabulary which a British person can normally use. A British may comment "I hear what to say" or may also say "oh I almost agree". A person who does not belong to the high context culture may often interpret it as a confirmation of this statement which he has been trying to make, however, he would not be able to understand the ironical denial which is in built in the high context culture.

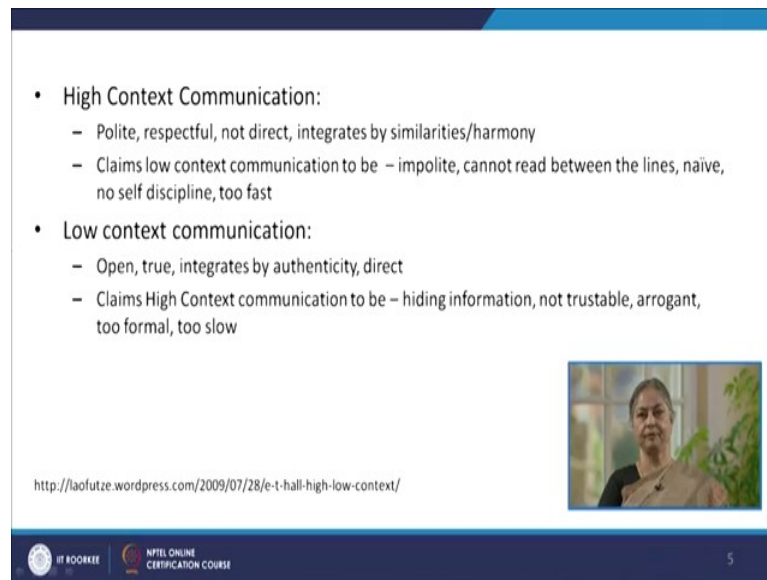
On the other hand we find that the low context culture believes in a precise communication. In low context culture a single information has only a single meaning and the way an information is to be decoded is not to be influenced by the rest of the unsaid things which have gone into the background.

We can also say that communication in low context culture is rule oriented, it is also better codified and since it is better codified and rule oriented knowledge can be easily transferable in such low context culture. And the examples which Hall has put across is that of the USA and Germany. At the same time we find that whether a person is mindful of the context or not also depends on the social positions.

And as we had seen in our earlier discussions a single aspect of non-verbal communication cannot be taken up as being the final meaning; however, it is a very positive indication. Hall has also suggested that these characteristics of high and low context cultures are also reflected in space arrangements and nowadays very recent researchers have found that these tendencies are reflected not only in space arrangements, architecture and interior designing; they are also reflected in the designing of the web pages in different cultures as well as in our understanding of time.

Whether the time we keep in our communication is monochrome or polychrome or whether during our dialogues and conversations we are using different aspects related with our understanding of time. So, in a way we can say that the proxemic understanding has an over reaching significance in our today's communicating behavior.

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The slide contains the following text:

- High Context Communication:
 - Polite, respectful, not direct, integrates by similarities/harmony
 - Claims low context communication to be – impolite, cannot read between the lines, naïve, no self discipline, too fast
- Low context communication:
 - Open, true, integrates by authenticity, direct
 - Claims High Context communication to be – hiding information, not trustable, arrogant, too formal, too slow

Below the text is a small video inset showing a woman speaking. At the bottom left of the slide is the URL: <http://laofutze.wordpress.com/2009/07/28/e-t-hall-high-low-context/>. The footer includes the IIT ROORKEE logo, the text 'NPTEL ONLINE CERTIFICATION COURSE', and the number '5'.

To continue this argument further, we can say that a high context communication is normally polite and respectful. It maintains certain proxemic distance, but at the same time it is never direct and therefore, it integrates by similarity and harmony etcetera. It is also critical of the low context communication because it believes that it is impolite and it does not have the ability to read between the lines and therefore, it is rather naïve or may be too fast.

In the same way we find that low context communication is believed to be open and true, it is suggested that it is integrated with a certain directness and therefore, it has a certain authenticity also. It therefore, also claims that high context communication normally hides information, it is arrogant and therefore, it cannot be trusted easily, it is too formal; too slow etcetera.

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Low Context/High Context Cultures
Individualistic/Relational Cultures

The diagram illustrates the differences between Low Context Individualistic and High Context Relational cultures. It features two human profiles facing each other, with a central box containing various communication elements. Dashed lines connect these elements to the profiles, indicating their relative importance in each culture.

- Low Context Individualistic:** Emphasizes Words, Social Status, Environment, Posture, and History.
- High Context Relational:** Emphasizes Gestures, Tone, Vocabulary, Choice, Phrasing, and History.

Adapted from 'Managing Intercultural Differences' by Claire B. Anderson

- Context is necessary to understand the connotations of given information
- Provides insights into workplace possibilities, sharing information, expectations from leadership roles
- Each approach has its own strengths

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This diagram suggests how the significance of low and high context culture is important for us to understand in any intercultural situations. It is very important to understand the context, the cultural context in which a person is speaking to find out what exactly are the connotations of given information or to understand the ways in which the given information has to be decoded. It also provides us insight into different possibilities at the work place in order to share information properly and at the same time to judge what are the expectations of different people from leadership role? We can say that each approach has its own strength.

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High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

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This particular video which you can check later on provides a very interesting commentary on the differences between the high context and low context cultures.

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What is low context culture?

- Low context is direct
- Low context is informative
- In low context you say what you mean

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN!

High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFNISg

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What is high and low context culture? What is the low context culture? In a low context culture it is more common for people to be direct say what they mean and could be considered more informative because of these points.

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What is high context culture?

- You have to look at the body language
- High context is formal and implies meaning
- High context culture is based on long term relationships

IMPLY → INFER

High Context vs. Low Context Cultures


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFNISg

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What is high context culture? High context culture is based on long term relationships, high context is formal and implies meaning and you have to look for the body language.

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Example low VS high context culture

French people can feel that Germans insult their intelligence by explaining the obvious, while Germans can feel that the French managers don't provide any direction.


High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFN5g

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Some examples of higher and lower context culture; here is an example of low versus high context culture. French people can feel that Germans insult their intelligence by explaining the obvious. While Germans can feel that the French managers do not provide any direction.

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Example of a high context culture

In Chinese culture its common for the hostess at a dinner party to serve the guest less food. It is seen as compliment for the guest to ask for more. This also prevents the guest from losing face if he doesn't like the food.

High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFN5g

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Here is an example of a high context culture. In Chinese culture its common for the hostess at the dinner party to serve to guests less food. It is seen as a compliment for the

guests to ask for more. This also prevents against for losing face if he does not like the food.

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Example of a low context culture

High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFN5g

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The slide features a central illustration of a man in a suit sitting on a large green arrow that curves upwards, symbolizing growth. Behind him is a bar chart with four bars of increasing height. The background is a light blue sky with white clouds. A 'BwToon' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the illustration.

Here is an example of a low context culture, because of a personal effort business is doing better and better.

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Business culture

High Context vs. Low Context Cultures

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z0F8_BFN5g

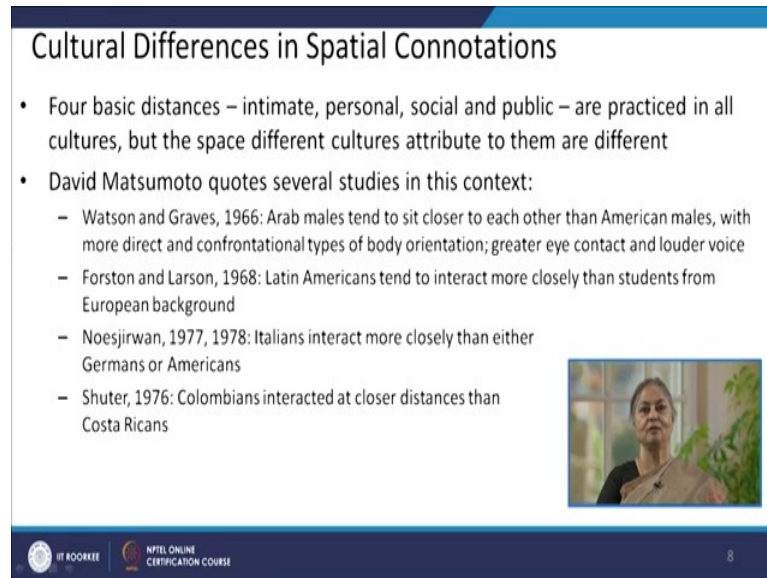
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The slide features a central word cloud with various business-related terms. The most prominent words are 'reputation', 'respect', 'resilience', 'relationships', 'reliability', 'recognition', and 'results'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'reputation' and 'respect' being the largest. A 'BwToon' logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the word cloud.

Business culture: Here a case in high context cultures, this is lesser in low context cultures. For example, Chinese people really care for status this is what determines if you deserve respect. In a low context culture like Germany they do not care about you and

your status, if you work hard and efficiently they respect. A supervisor in a German business does not have a higher status than his employees just because his position is higher, if you work hard your supervisor would treat you as equal.

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Cultural Differences in Spatial Connotations

- Four basic distances – intimate, personal, social and public – are practiced in all cultures, but the space different cultures attribute to them are different
- David Matsumoto quotes several studies in this context:
 - Watson and Graves, 1966: Arab males tend to sit closer to each other than American males, with more direct and confrontational types of body orientation; greater eye contact and louder voice
 - Forston and Larson, 1968: Latin Americans tend to interact more closely than students from European background
 - Noesjirwan, 1977, 1978: Italians interact more closely than either Germans or Americans
 - Shuter, 1976: Colombians interacted at closer distances than Costa Ricans

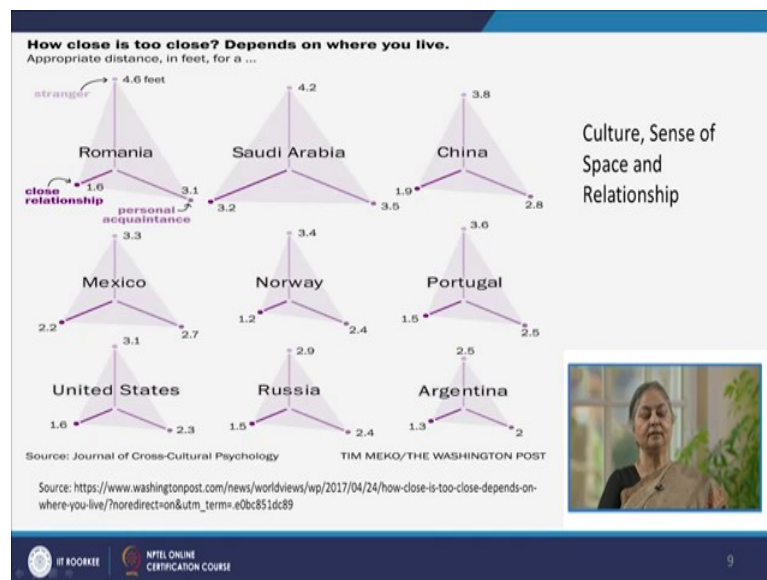
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With this background now we come to a discussion of cultural differences in this spatial connotations, we have already looked at the four basic zones of distances that is intimate personal, social and public. These zones are practiced in all cultures, but the space which is attributed to these different distances in different cultures is different. David Matsumoto has quoted several studies in this context, he has quoted a 1966 study over Watson and graves in which it was found that Arab males tend to sit closer to each other in comparison to American males.

At the same time Arab males were seen with the direct and confrontational types of body orientation, they also had a greater eye contact and were using louder voice. Another study which he has quoted is the 1968 study by Fortson and Larson in which it was found that the Latin Americans tend to interact more closely than students from European background. This study was conducted in academic university background; he has also quoted a study by Noesjirwan which was conducted in 1977 and 1978. And which had found that Italians interact more closely in comparison to either Germans or American.

Another study which David Matsumoto has quoted is the 1976 study by Shuter in which he had said that Colombians interacted at closer distances than Costa Ricans. These spatial connotations alert us to the possibility of cultural differences which are in built in our psyche.

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This diagram also helps us to understand how different cultures understand and interpret the sense of a space in their inter-personal dealings.

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Proxemic Codes based on Gendered Norms and Social Hierarchy

- Space in Gender and Power Relationships
 - Contact and Non-contact Cultures
 - Contact cultures use small interaction distances. Non-contact Cultures avoid close inter personal distances and touching
 - These cultural patterns are also codes, unconsciously imbibed by persons at a very early age
- Context shapes internalization of messages regarding spatial requirements for functional purposes. Gender is an important key as the world has asymmetrical gender norms. "Space Genderization": designated spaces in conventional cultures
- Invasion of personal space by different genders.
 - Hispanics, followed by Europeans/Caucasians are least likely to feel that women invade their personal space. At the other extreme, Middle Easterns, followed by Africans, are the most likely to feel that women invade their personal space*

*Ref: <https://hoards.com/article-6012-gender-&-cultural-communication-differences.html>

Another aspect which is significant for us to understand in the context of proxemics is how it is affected by our understanding of gender and at the same time how does our understanding of social hierarchy influences our understanding of proximity. Space is always influenced by our understanding of how a particular gender code has to be enacted in a society and also what is the role of power relationships within and outside different gendered relationships.


We have seen how contact cultures use a small interaction distances whereas, non-contact cultures avoid these close inter-personal distances as well as the frequent touching of each other. These cultural practices in fact, are the culture codes which human beings learn at a very early stage of their life. Different researchers have told us that by the time a child is 3 years old, the child has imbibed these social codes. So, these social and cultural codes which define our understanding of distance and at the same time which define our understanding of a proper gendered behavior “are learnt at a very early and impressionable age” so that they become almost a permanent part of our psyche.

Context helps us in internalizing the messages which are passed on regarding the requirements of a space and distances for functional purposes in our day to day and work life. Since different societies in our world today have different gender norms, these gender norms are not necessarily symmetrical and therefore, we find that different types of cultures have different designated spaces for different genders. This idea is known as genderization of the space or space genderization.

Particularly in conventional cultures when the gender appropriate behavior is highly different for people belonging to different genders, this idea becomes important for us. It is seen that depending on the genders people interpret the space and its intervention by people belonging to different genders in different manners. Certain researchers have found out that Hispanics followed by Europeans or people of Caucasian origin are least likely to feel that women are invading their personal space. So, they do not feel bad or threatened if women are coming into their personal space on the other hand people of the Middle East as well as in terms of intensity they have followed by Africans who are the most likely to feel when women invade their personal space. This can be found in other aspects of our understanding of space.

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- Cultures have different models for different genders
- Gender plays a key role in our understanding/functioning of space. Masculine understanding of proximity in cross-gender situations is different in several cultures in comparison to feminine understanding. Women in some cultures can be more sensitive to social situations and avoid dominant “invasions” of personal space of people they are not highly familiar with (Sorokowska et al. 588)
- Generally, enforcing closer proximity during dyadic interactions conveys higher dominance, which is typically related to male psychological characteristics, and behaviors consistent with such stereotype might be especially strong in some cultures
- Sensitivity to differences - cultural, as well as individual - makes us more observant and effective in communication
- Differences should not be turned into stereotypes



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Since cultures have different modules of behavior as far as different genders are concerned, it plays a very important part in our understanding of how a space is to be used. The understanding of proxemics by a man in any cross gender situation is likely to be different in different cultures in comparison to how a women understands it. In certain cultures we find that women are likely to be more sensitive in those social situations when they have to interact in any cross gender situation and therefore, they try to avoid what they perceive to be an invasion of the personal space by men.

Generally, it can be said that closer proximity during dyadic interactions conveys a higher dominance and in several cultures we find that this role of higher dominance is normally referred to the male psychological characteristics and therefore, such stereotypes are especially strong in such cultures. The idea behind all these discussion is that our understanding of a space how do we negotiate it in our inter-personal interaction with other people is guided by our understanding of gender roles in a particular culture.

Our sensitivity to these differences which may be cultural as well as individual because in the same culture we find that individual behaviors may also be different. So, this sensitivity to these differences would make us more observant of the behavior of other people and would turn us into a more effective person in our communication because it would enable us to have a better empathy.


Another precaution which we have to take during our understanding of the proxemic behavior is that these cultural differences should never be turned into cultural stereotypes to look down upon any cultural norm.

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Proxemic Dimensions

- Hall – proxemics behavior is a function of eight different dimensions
- Notation system: these dimensions can be recorded with their appropriate scales, system designed to provide a specific method of observation

1. Postural-sex identifiers– relates the postures of people according to their gender
2. Sociofugal-sociopetal orientation (SFP axis) – culturally coded, linked with social setting, age, gender, status
 - sociofugal describes space arrangements that push people apart
 - sociopetal identifies patterns that pull people together
3. Kinesthetic factors – positioning of body parts, whether they are touching or not, four ways



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Another aspect which is significant for us to understand in the context of proxemics is the different dimensions which initially Hall had talked about. According to Hall proximate behavior is a function of eight different dimensions, he had developed these different dimensions basically as a system of notation so that these dimensions can be recorded for research purposes on appropriate scales. This system also enables the researchers to keep meticulous observations.

The first dimension which he has referred to is the postural sex identifier which is related with the postures which people take according to their gender. In our understanding of the postural sex identifier the role of the culture is important. The second dimension he has talked about is the SFP axis or the sociofugal or sociopetal orientation, it is also culturally coded and it is also linked with our age, gender, status as well as the social situation.

Sociofugal describes those space arrangements that push people apart away from each other. And sociopetal space arrangements are those arrangements which are based on those patterns which pull people together. The third dimension he has talked about is related with the kinesthetic factors, it looks at the positioning of body parts and different

ways in which these body parts can touch each other. He has illustrated four ways and different body parts can touch each other.

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4. Touch code – amount of touch during each interaction, how do people touch:
accidental, caressing, prolonged holding etc.

- Cultural variations in amount and frequency of public touching
- touch of certain body parts may be frowned upon

5. Retinal combinations – amount of eye-contact, sharp, clear, peripheral, avoidance

- Culture, gender, power hierarchies

6. Thermal code – amount of body heat which people perceive in other,

- Conducted or radiant heat
- may result in avoidance etc.

7. Olfaction code – breath and odor

8. Voice loudness – distance, relationship, subject, culture

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After that he talks about the touch code that is the amount of touch which is permissible during each interaction. How do people touch, how much frequently they touch each other, whether this touch is accidental or is it prolonged is it caressing or is it holding, whether people accept these touches conveniently or do they feel uncomfortable.


So, the amount in frequency of touching each other in public is conditioned by our cultural understanding and at the same time which body part is being touched upon is also decided by our cultural understanding. As we shall see in our further discussions particularly our discussions of haptics, we would look at how in certain cultures touching over head is considered to be inauspicious.

The fifth dimension he has talked about is that of retinal combination. That is the amount of eye contact as well as the nature of eye contact, whether it is sharp, clear, peripheral or whether there is an avoidance. As we shall see it is also based with our cultural understanding, our gender differences as well as the power hierarchies within any organization. Then he also talks about the thermal and the olfaction codes; thermal code is related with the amount of body heat which people perceive in each other and it can function only when we are very closely positioned with each other.

Olfactory codes are basically related with the interpretation as well as the messages which we want to convey with the help of our odor, the smell which we wear on our body etcetera. Again we shall discuss how in certain cultures it is preferable and how in certain cultures it is to be avoided. The last dimension he has talked about is related with the loudness of voice which is conditioned by the distance, the relationship, the subject under discussion as well as the culture and several other factors.

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- These systems are bio-basic, rooted in the physiology of the organism (Hall 1007)
- Not all of the eight factors are of equal complexity, nor do all of them function at all times
- The thermal and olfaction inputs are present at close distances
- Vision is more complex than either of these, and it is normally screened out only at very close distances
- Hall has defined behavioral characteristics and distances for eight personal space zones
- He concludes that proxemic behaviour, or human interaction within these clearly defined zones, is a cultural universal, but within these zones specific behavioral responses are defined according to culturally specific conventions (Sanders 47-48)




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These systems and dimensions are bio-basic and they are rooted in physiology of the organism. It is not necessary that in our understanding of the proxemic behavior all these eight factors are equally important. And at the same time not all these factors share the same label of complexity. For example, our understanding of the vision is much more complex in comparison to our understanding of thermal and olfaction inputs.

After having discussed these dimensions, he also says that there is what can be termed as a cultural universal understanding of the four basic zones of distances; however, specific behavior responses to these zones are defined according to our culturally specific conventions. So, again we find that Hall has repeatedly highlighted the significance of cultural understanding of proximity.

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- Creation and use/organization of built space reflects these subconscious, decisions
- Many of us may be unaware of the norms of Proxemic behavior within our own culture, but we become conscious of them when these norms are violated or when we notice differences in spatial behavior due to the norms of foreign culture (Agnus p. 6)
- Cultural space tells us a lot “about the nature of a relationship. So if someone comes more into your personal space than you are used to, you can often feel like, ‘What’s happening here?’” (Kathryn Sorrells)
- Misconceptions are also recurrent as lenses may be different



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Another aspect which is deeply related with our understanding of proxemics is how we create and use the built-space around us which is also a reflection of our subconscious understanding of proxemics. Many of us may not be aware that the norms of proxemic behavior govern our cultural understanding, but we become acutely conscious of these norms whenever there is a suggested violation or when we visit a foreign land where the arrangement of a space is very different from what we had been used to perceive up till that point.



Cultural space tells us a lot “about the nature of a relationship” and here I would like to quote Kathryn Sorrell who has commented “so, if someone comes more into a personal space, then you are used to you can often feel like, ‘what is happening here?’” So, we can also see very easily that as our cultural lenses are different misconceptions can also easily occur, if we are not attentive to the cultural differences in our understanding of proxemics.

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Three Types of Space

- In any informal or professional setting, cognizance of proximity and usage of space accordingly is important. Hall's categorization of space according to the degree to which cultures treat spatial assemblages is highly relevant
- Makes important distinctions in his discussions of intercultural encounters and cross-cultural variations in proxemic behavior: A small room can be cozy to some, oppressive to others
 1. Fixed feature space
 2. Semifixed feature space . These arrangements can also be seen as Sociofugal or Sociopetal (Humphrey Osmond, 1957):
 - Sociofugal Spaces - encourage solitariness, tend to drive people apart
 - Sociopetal – conducive, organized for interpersonal communication, encourages people to stay close
 3. Non-fixed space



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In our understanding of proximity, the way we arrange our space which is available to us in a formal or an informal setting is also important. Though in our understanding of the space arrangements as a part of our studies of proxemics, the understanding of cultural variation is important. Still roughly we can say that the understanding of space is governed by our understanding of three basic types. It is true that cultural understanding of space does exist, for example, a very small room which is very barely furnished can sound to be cozy to a person. On the other hand to a person who is born in an effusive culture the same room may look rather oppressive and bare. But despite it we find that the three different types of space which researchers have pointed out are the fixed feature space, the semi fixed feature space and the non fixed feature space.



The semi fixed feature space is the one in which we find the maximum impact of different types of understanding of proxemics and culture. For example, the sociofugal and sociopetal understanding of space arrangement is same maximum in our arrangement of the semi fixed feature space.

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1. Fixed-Feature Space

- Fixed feature space is characterized by spatial constellations which are formed by things that are immobile – wall, territorial boundaries. Significant in office buildings, schools, religious places, malls
- Hall: perceptions of fixed feature space are "internalized" or learned early in life through a Skinnerian reinforcement procedure* set up by the culture
- This "programming" at an early age is hard to shed, producing difficulties when one is faced with inconsistencies owing to intercultural contacts

*B.F.Skinner, a theory of motivation, a learning process through which the strength of a behavior is modified by reinforcement or punishment, Operant/ instrumental conditioning



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The fixed feature space is characterized by those constants which are given to us, those immobile aspects which we normally cannot change, for example, wall, the territorial boundaries etcetera. And the fixed feature space is significant in the way we construct office buildings or a schools or the shopping malls the religious places, places of public entertainment etcetera.

So, the way we perceive the features of our fixed space are internalized at a very early stage in our life. The world which Hall has used for it is the Skinnerian reinforcement procedure. Now, what exactly is this reinforcement procedure which has been suggested by Skinnerian? B. F. Skinner a famous behavioral scientist had put forward this theory of motivation and he had said that it is on the basis of the punishment and reinforcement that people learn certain behaviors almost in a permanent fashion. An appropriate behavior is awarded where, as an inappropriate behavior is punished severely. So, it is through this Skinnerian reinforcement procedure to which as young children all of us are exposed to our understanding of the significance of fixed feature space is internalized.

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2. Semi-fixed Feature Space

- Spatial constellations are formed by mobile elements, such as curtains, screens, moveable partitions, color and furniture arrangements. These patterns are also culturally grounded, as are the perceptions of how it is proper to order physical settings (Baldassare & Feller 484-5)
 - Boundary markers, fences, closed doors, chairs placed in a conversational group, the arrangement of furniture in an auditorium and the layout of offices -- all enable someone who knows the system to interpret what has taken place or the message that is intended
- As Hazard notes: "Walk into an empty court- room and look around. The furniture arrangement will tell you at a glance who has what authority." (Hall 1019)



Image: <https://www.tekion.com/ca/planning/education--library>



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The second is the semi fixed feature space. The semi fixed feature space is created by an arrangement of those elements which are mobile. For example, the way we arrange curtains, screens, the partitions which we create with the help of furniture etcetera and at the same time the way we use colors. So, these are the boundary markers and they enable us to understand how a system is to be interpreted.


If you walk into any room, we get certain impressions on the basis of how furniture etcetera has been arranged in this room. So, simply by looking at the furniture arrangement we find that we can develop a way in which messages are been communicated to us, whether it is a friendly environment or not, how much severity is there in the office space designing etcetera are immediately clear to us when we look at a particular office space.

For example, if you look at this particular photograph which is there on the right hand top corner. We can find that it gives us the interpretation or the impression of being an open and friendly space. In comparison to others we find that a different office space can also make us feel rather clingy.

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3. Non-fixed Feature Space

- Space is informal and dynamic when a person varies the spatial features of settings or inter- personal distances. It is the space maintained between interactants without being aware of it. Also, the position someone prefers and all the things he does to appropriate the space around him says something about that person.
- 'According to scientists, personal space involves not only the invisible bubble around the body, but all the senses.
- People may feel their space is being violated when they experience an un-welcome sound, scent or stare: a person talking quarrelsomely on cellphone, a shouting co-worker in the adjacent cubicle, someone glaring at you



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A non-fixed feature space is informal and dynamic when a person varies the spatial features of setting or inter personal distances. It is a space which is maintained between interactants without being aware of it. Also the position someone prefers individually and the things he or she does to appropriate the space around him saying something about that person.

So, you might have also noticed that when we interact with each other and particularly when we occupy a seating space, we not only occupy the place which is allowed to us by the invisible bubble around us, but at the same time we also want to occupy certain space around us. We want to put certain artifacts there, we want to put certain objects there and if somebody pushes a file or a cup of tea suddenly across the table towards us we feel violated.

So, we find that whenever there is an unwelcome sound or even a stare or a scent we find that we are being violated in a space which is accursing to us. So, that is why we find that our understanding of non fixed feature space is related with our own psyche and this is also the space which is perhaps the most significant way to impact our work performance in any situation.

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SPACE - NON FIXED FEATURE

• Non fixed-feature space is the space immediately surrounding our body that each of us perceives to be ours.

• In this picture, it can be seen each man has a certain amount of space kept between him and his counterparts.

Non-fixed Feature Space

Image courtesy: <https://slideplayer.com/slide/7794575/>

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This is also an understanding of the non fixed feature space, so which is a space which is immediately surrounding our body and each of us perceive this space to be our own. Proxemics also very closely related with the way architectural designs are put across.

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Proxemics & Architectural Designs

- Proxemics is usually of interest to architects and designers because it emphasizes the concept that spatial distance is a "silent language" through which men unwittingly convey attitude, feelings, and judgements about their fellows
- This emphasis fits naturally with the wish of architects to find in the behavioral sciences evidence that designs variables are objectively meaningful (Hall 9)
- Prospects of a new urbanism and emphasis on context appropriate architecture
- The design of social space - the "interface" between social structure, built environment and human behaviour - is one of the most challenging aspects of architectural and planning
 - German business personnel visiting the US see open doors in offices and businesses as indicative of a relaxed/unbusinesslike attitude
 - Americans get the feeling that the German's closed doors conceal a secretive or conspiratorial operation"

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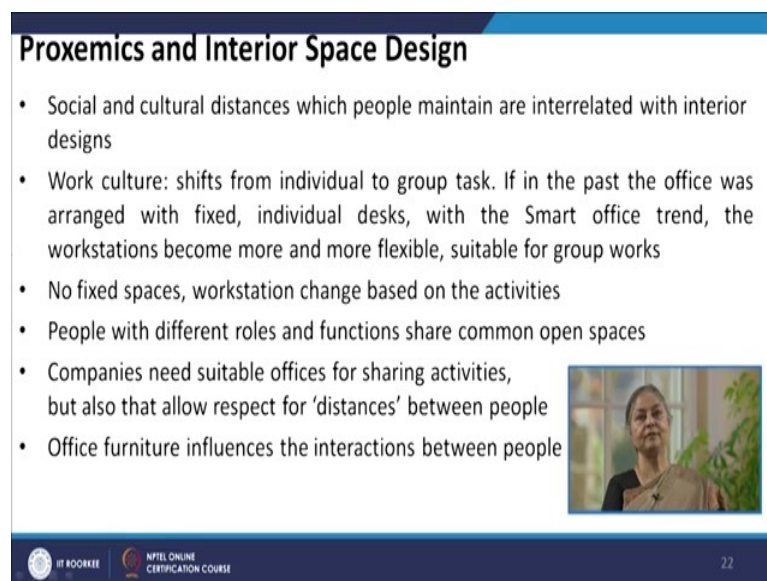
We have seen it in our discussion of the fixed space also that a particular architectural design passes on a particular message and therefore, we find that it is also considered as a silent language through which people put across their attitudes feelings and even judgments about other people. The latest example of it is the concept of new urbanism

which has started to emphasize the context appropriate architecture. The design of a social space the interface between social structure, built environment and human behaviour is one of the most challenging concepts of architectural and planning.

The ways in which we respond to it are also very interesting to note. For example, researchers have found that German business people visiting the US often look at the open doors in offices and business houses as an indication of a relaxed attitude which is even almost unbusiness like. They do not like the openness which has been introduced in the architecture.

On the other hand when Americans visit a traditional German office they find that the closed door are rather secretive they may even conceal something which is almost conspiratorial. So, you would find that these understandings are developed on the basis of our cultural understanding of how proxemics is to be unfolded in our architectural designs.

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Proxemics and Interior Space Design

- Social and cultural distances which people maintain are interrelated with interior designs
- Work culture: shifts from individual to group task. If in the past the office was arranged with fixed, individual desks, with the Smart office trend, the workstations become more and more flexible, suitable for group works
- No fixed spaces, workstation change based on the activities
- People with different roles and functions share common open spaces
- Companies need suitable offices for sharing activities, but also that allow respect for 'distances' between people
- Office furniture influences the interactions between people

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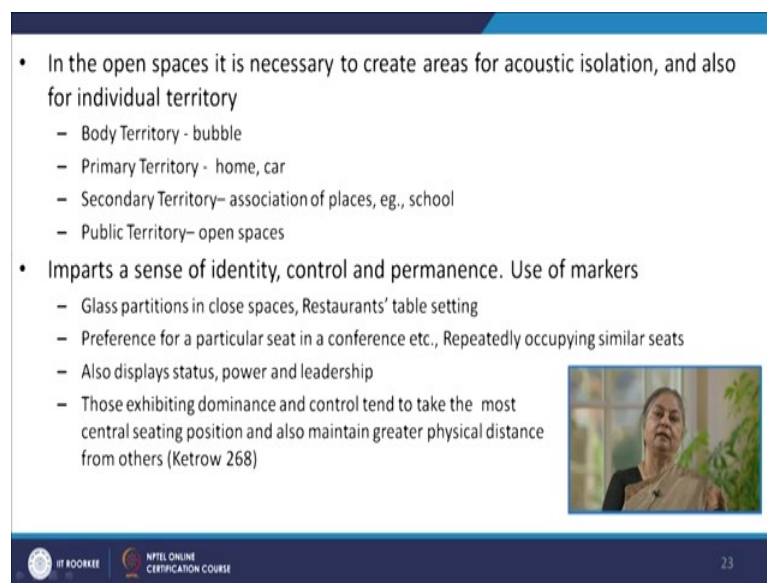
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It is also equally important in the way we look at the space design of the interior. So, social and cultural distances which people maintain are interrelated with interior designs. So, we find that with changing cultural norms the interior space designs also change. In our offices we also see that now there is a shift from the individual work culture to a culture of group or team work. So, if in the past the office was arranged with a relatively more fixed and individual desks, now with the beginning of the smart office trend the

workstations become more and more flexible where different teams can be arranged for different works.

So, the space is no more fixed and the workstations may also change on the basis of the activities. But a person who has been used to a fixed office space may not feel the same level of work enthusiasm in a non fixed space. Companies also require suitable offices for sharing activities, but at the same time they have to allow the respect for distances which should exist between people.

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- In the open spaces it is necessary to create areas for acoustic isolation, and also for individual territory
 - Body Territory - bubble
 - Primary Territory - home, car
 - Secondary Territory– association of places, eg., school
 - Public Territory– open spaces
- Imparts a sense of identity, control and permanence. Use of markers
 - Glass partitions in close spaces, Restaurants' table setting
 - Preference for a particular seat in a conference etc., Repeatedly occupying similar seats
 - Also displays status, power and leadership
 - Those exhibiting dominance and control tend to take the most central seating position and also maintain greater physical distance from others (Kerrow 268)

In the open spaces therefore, it becomes necessary for us to create areas for acoustic isolation and also for the space which should be known as the individual territory. Our understanding of territory is also pretty much linked with our understanding of the four zones of proxemic distance, there is what is known primarily as the body territory which is the bubble which we carry around us. Then there is a primary territory which obviously, belongs to us only for example, our own home, our car also.

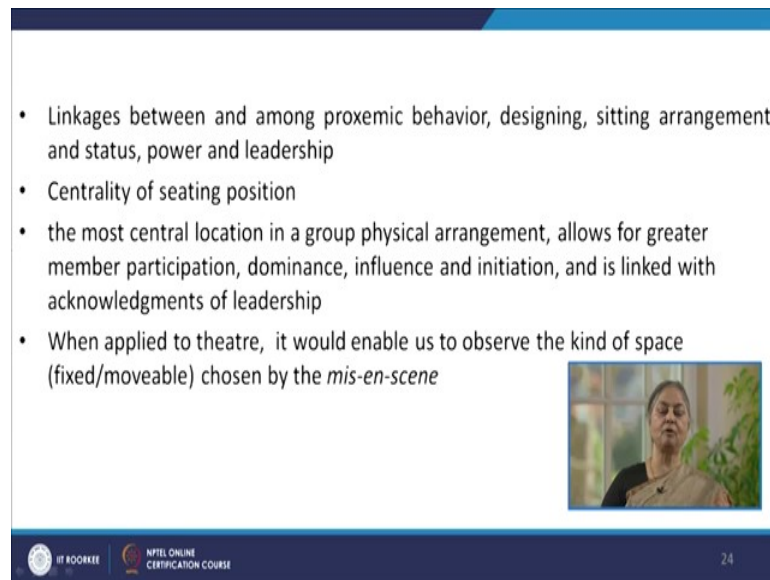
Then there is a secondary territory where we develop certain association because we go and do some work over there, it may be our office space, it may be our school etcetera and then lastly this is the public territory which is the open space. So, the space also imparts a sense of identity and if we have a well defined space around us we find that it also gives us a certain sense of identity control and permanence.

We have referred to the use of markers which some people use around us and we find that it is a very interesting way to understand how the relationships, the status, and power dynamics are displayed around us. You might have also noticed that in close offices spaces also, where a good number of people have to sit and work for long hours. There may be small glass partitions the glass partitions may be very low in terms of height, but at the same time they are able to designate a particular space which is one's own space. So, it helps us to understand our own territorial rights.

In the table setting of restaurants also you might be also noticed that if it is a table setting for the two, the restaurant owners normally put a small objects in the centre of the table. They would put small ketchup bottles or may be salt shakers etcetera in the middle so, that if it is in arrangement for the two this is your space and this is my space. You might have also noticed that if it is a seating where friends are seated, they would be very casually putting this sitting aside so, that to communicate the day space which is between them is equally shared. On the other hand if you are having a cup of tea or spending some time in a restaurant with another person where the table have been set only for two people, but you are not very particularly friendly with the other person you are on a somewhat formal and strict tones, then try to conduct a very small experiment. Suppose this is a salt shaker or ketchup bottle unconsciously try to put it slightly over this side of the other person so, that the space on your side of the table is maximized. Within 5 to 10 minutes you would find that the other person would shift it back to you towards your side to increase the space which you have curtailed in a process you try to push it again the person who push it back. Irrespective of the fact how comfortable and familiar one is in ones understanding of proximity.

You would find it soon it would be a tug of war people pushing the salt and shakers towards each other site. So, you would find that it is a display of the power dynamics, it is also a display of the relationship. You would also find that if you are attending a conference for two days people go and occupy a particular seat and keep on occupying the same seat repeatedly all the sessions. why? Because they have developed a particular association unconsciously. So, you would find that our understanding of proximity is significant in understanding these aspects of our communication.

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- Linkages between and among proxemic behavior, designing, sitting arrangement and status, power and leadership
- Centrality of seating position
- the most central location in a group physical arrangement, allows for greater member participation, dominance, influence and initiation, and is linked with acknowledgments of leadership
- When applied to theatre, it would enable us to observe the kind of space (fixed/moveable) chosen by the *mis-en-scene*

In seating arrangements also we find that there are linkages between and among proxemic behavior designing, seating arrangement and power and leadership equations. The centrality of seating position automatically conveys a power play. The most central location in a group physical arrangement allows for greater participation by the members, at the same time it also provides a certain dominance to a person and it is also linked with the perception of other people that the leadership of that individual is being perceived.

You would find that these aspects of our cultural understanding of proxemics are also carried over to the way space is designed in stage, in theatre and in film. The way people choose the *mis-en-scene* and different properties related with it, also communicates our cultural understanding of proximity.

So, today we have finished our discussion of proxemics, you would find that many aspects which we have discussed in the last two modules would be taken over again when we will look at different other aspects of non-verbal communication. Because, any aspect of non-verbal communication cannot be taken in isolation. In our next module we will look at the oculosics, the language of the eye contact.

Thank you.